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AUTHOR Fifer, Fred L.
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ABSTRACT

This paper both reviews results of research related to teacher evaluation and then presents a suggested evaluation format to be used based on these research findings. The research reviewed falls into five general categories: format for evaluation, guidelines for evaluation, criteria for evaluation, problems with evaluation, and definitions of effectiveness as related to teaching. The proposed model for formative classroom evaluation is described as having six essentials for building a solid foundation for classroom instruction: physical arrangement of room, personal qualities, classroom management, teaching skills, communication skills, and additional data that affect classroom climate. (JM)

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TEACHER OBSERVATION: A FORMAT FOR SYSTEMATIC FORMATIVE EVALUATION

A PAPER
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Fred L. Fifer, Jr., Ph.D.
Program Head, Science Education
The University of Texas at Dallas
Richardson, Texas 75080

EA 015 749

TEACHER OBSERVATION: A FORMAT FOR
SYSTEMATIC FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Introduction

A need to discriminate between "good" and "bad" teaching still exists. The argument seems to center on how one determines "good or bad" rather than whether or not we should be concerned about this subject. A review of the literature reveals an abundance of studies supporting evaluation and an equally abundant group critiquing how it is and/or should be accomplished. The effort examined here is a process for formative-data-collection which, when compared with subsequent follow-up observations, provides a continuous, observable change. First, an examination of the literature is necessary in order to understand the total evaluation picture. Most of the research fell into one of the following general categories:

- format for evaluation,
- guidelines for evaluation,
- criteria for evaluation,
- problems with evaluation effects, e.g., presence of observer in class, which test?, and:
- definitions of "effectiveness" as related to teaching.

Research Reviewed -- Format for Evaluation

A common complaint relative to format is which, if any, is best . . . Statements are heard like ". . . she's an excellent teacher . . .!," or ". . . he's very effective - really produces . . .," yet at the same time, trying to put measurable parameters into an evaluative format seems to fall short of being able to "document" these statements of teaching excellence. Moxley (1978) advocates an evaluative format which focuses on the "individual" rather than an "aggregate" or "subjective" evaluation. "Individual" is

defined as viewing the total teaching experience rather than pre-set ranking criteria or scales. William Tracy (1978) emphasizes the importance that whatever format selected, application should be in a systematic way, including clear demonstration by school personnel involved of their concern and confidence in the teaching staff. This supports the model presented here for formative evaluation of appropriate teaching skills. A somewhat more radical approach to evaluation is a rank-ordering system. Jeffery South (1980) reports this format currently being advocated with administrators and classified personnel in Phoenix-Paradise Valley Unified School District. The debate over this model seems to lie with the type of working environment it creates. The superintendent thought it produced beneficial competition, yet some of his administrators complained the "fierce competition" bred "a pitched battle." Margaret Verble (1979) agrees with the ranking format although the data she collected was on pre-service teachers performance, the data (high-positive-correlations) supports the idea that "quality teaching" can be identified and thus teachers' ranked. The acceptance and use of this model lies with the background of the data-collectors and the definition of "quality teaching."

Alexander Feldvebel (1980) determined in his work that whether the evaluation includes process, presage or product criteria, the underlying credibility must be based on "clear purposes, methods, and procedures consistent with these purposes." The model advocated in this paper focused on purposes, method and procedures; not to hire or fire a teacher, but rather to aid a teacher in becoming more effective in the classroom.

Robert Rothberg (1979) supports a format for teacher evaluation based on peer and self-evaluation. The example cited generated direction for teacher improvement in basically a non-threatening atmosphere. Ronald Duhamel, et al (1979) examined three basic formats, advocating more attention be given to including product evaluation with process and presage -- especially in these days of accountability. Support for the product-evaluation is also found in Robert Madgic's (1980) research. A focus by the evaluator would be on the "student-products" and the "teacher-products." This approach marries student-performance based on instructional objectives with the teacher effectiveness. A longtime complaint of this format has been the "teaching-to-the-test" concerns . . . but if we truly believe that the "test" is the measure of a student's knowledge of the subject (the product) why not teach to the test . . .?

Joe Smith (1980) offers additional concerns at the pre-employment stage relative to "good" or "poor" candidates for employment. He suggests an intensive interview format in an attempt to ascertain the most likely candidates. Research conducted by Fifer (1982) indicates support for Smith's position. The data indicated significant correlation in key areas by building principals as they attempt to determine qualities/competencies in interviews with prospective teachers.

In a review of a teacher evaluation format, Johnston and Yeakey (1979) narrowed these to subjective or objective criteria. Their findings and conclusions produced recommendations which included:

- teacher self-evaluation
- staff involvement in formulation of evaluating programs
- criteria based on research
- inclusion of all major factors affecting evaluation
- expertise of others in evaluation
- supportive follow-up.

Advocacy for these criteria should be the basis of an evaluation format -- people tend to support what they help create . . .

Research Reviewed -- Guidelines for Evaluation

These guidelines, in many ways, support the recommendations of Johnston and Yeakey (1979) in their review of formats. William Norris (1980) suggests seven premises for guidance in the evaluative process. Emphasized in this set of guidelines is the focus on meeting needs of both the evaluator and the evaluatees. Guidelines for evaluation are worthless unless they offer a framework for improvement as well as the identification of teacher shortcomings. Many of the suggestions by Roelle and Wood (1980) are supported by the formative system postulated here -- regular pattern of observations, documentation, infraction of rules, immediate feedback on observation and teachers provided with copies of evaluation process to be used.

Specificity of guideline-determination can prevent problems in the future. In "15 Things to Remember When Evaluating Teachers," (1980) it suggested very practical steps in the development of such guidelines. Key elements are "documentation, openness, fairness and close attention to procedures." Major concerns in establishing guidelines rests in the areas of "qualifications" of the evaluator. Criticisms commonly heard are "evaluators (principals) lack certification, etc. in areas they must evaluate," or "evaluations are useless in improving teaching . . ." Lawrence E. Kult (1978) examines these criticisms and suggests reexamination of the role and purpose (of the principal) in the evaluation process. This in essence would predicate the establishment of useful guidelines. In agreement with this collaborative development of guidelines is Garawski's work (1980). If the ultimate result

is improved instruction, then the greater degree of understanding between all parties concerned relative to the goal, the better the chances for realization of these goals.

Research Reviewed -- Criteria for Evaluation

Establishing the guidelines for evaluation must be followed by determining the factors of teaching you wish to evaluate. Again, the feeling of ownership arises. If these criteria are mutually developed or at least agreed upon, support for and probability of success improves dramatically. A model of criteria determination developed by Sapone (1980) offers a format for selecting criteria for customizing an evaluative system. Sapone warns though ". . . implementation resides with those who desire to improve their appraisal and evaluation system." A model, by whomever, is worthless until some vested interest is realized by all parties concerned. William J. McCormick (1979) suggests that an important link to the evaluative criteria include the inservice time for follow-up on data collected during evaluations. His data supported that the inservice component "not only increased the teachers' knowledge . . ." ". . . but had a significant effect on their ability to apply it."

In a specific related area to the original focus of the model presented here (subject-science) James Okey and William Capie (1980) utilized a competency assignment system developed by the Teacher Assessment Project, University of Georgia under contract with the Georgia Department of Education. The criteria contained on their instrument identified (1) competencies, (2) indicators of competencies and (3) how they were assessed. Reliability of the use of these instruments indicate validity of the criteria as interpreted by several observers. Indications suggest valid criteria can

be developed which reveal similar results. J. F. Eggleston (1979) implies in his work that criteria must be defined and state whether its focus is on intentions, processes or outcomes -- in short, is the criteria to evaluate "teachers" or "teaching"? He suggests that the teacher should become a "researcher, engaged in a constructive critique of teaching processes." W. John Smyth (1980) suggests a core of criteria must be established. He quotes a paper by G. Channon stating "promising indicators of teachers effectiveness" which might form the basic criteria of evaluation. In summary these are:

- time students spend in purposeful activities
- praise of students academic responses
- behavior modification techniques
- direct, questions -- more effective than praise of behavior
- immediate feedback correlates positively
- extra time for students who need it enables positive results
- careful monitoring of classroom behaviors work best in dealing with management.

Criteria as reviewed in the literature is as varied as one would suspect. Yet the variance is fuel for the position of "customized" evaluations. Perhaps no better argument need be made than to examine the material available and on that basis strongly emphasize the benefits of mutually (evaluator-evaluatee) developed instruments for the collection of data.

Research Reviewed -- Problems With Evaluation

As with any type of research, teacher evaluation has its limiting factors. According to McIntyre (1980) many research efforts support the difficulty of viewing "actual-classroom-teaching" with an observer present. The work over the past seven years at UT-Dallas does not support this entirely. The data suggests that student-behavior continued similarly with or without the presence of observers. Feedback from both supervising

teachers and student-teachers supports this position. One of the underlying strengths of this model is the frequency of observations. Perhaps the key to any quality evaluation which involves observation must be to include enough visits to diminish the influence of the "visitor" in class on all parties involved. (Note: It has been our experience that once class starts and work begun, student interaction, - including deviant behavior, - is little affected by the presence of ourselves -- this might be markedly different if the "visitor" were the building principal.)

Research Reviewed -- Definitions of "Effectiveness" As Related to Teaching

In this final category of research reviewed, we should remember:

> . . . observations are most beneficial for recording and analyzing the teaching art - not judging it . . . Effective teaching cannot be proven by the presence or absence of any instructional variable. . . McNeil & Popham (1973).

Effectiveness, like beauty, is in the "eye-of-the-beholder. . ." Each new model or innovation can, and perhaps justifiably, claim some new niche or "insight" into the incredibly complex subject - the evaluation of teaching. Levin (1979) states that teacher evaluation serves two purposes: (1) a guide to decisions about hiring, retention and promotion and; (2) to help improve teaching. He further states the second purpose to be contingent upon "the extent to which evaluation influences the subsequent behavior and attitudes of teachers and students." Lester Solomon (1979) cites changes in the Georgia State Board of Education policies to include criteria for professional (renewable) certificates based on performance -- demonstration of on-the-job essential competencies as evidence for effectiveness. Homer Coker, Donald Medley and Robert Soar (1980) question mastery of competencies relationship to effective teaching citing the following analogy:

Teacher A possesses all the competencies corresponding to a "good teacher" and Teacher B possesses none, or at best, few of these "good" qualities. The results of their work indicate that the students in these respective classrooms progress more rapidly in cognitive than in affective in Teacher A's room and the reverse in Teacher B's room. Further, they state ". . . the differences would be small - perhaps nonexistent." Orpaz and Zuzovsky (1976) felt the effectiveness was realized in their work by the observations they made plus interviews with students following the observations. The major "effective" outgrowth of this combined observation/interview were the insights into interpretations of learning difficulties. John Henry, et al. (1981) felt the "effectiveness" of their structural observational efforts was in the consistent structure of the feedbacks provided by a "school-panel" made up of the supervising teacher, coordinator of school-experience in the school and the university supervisor.

What is or is not "effective" cannot be decided at this point. One must identify the problem which is confronting the teaching process, decide what the optimum situation should be and then develop strategies for realizing these objectives. This sounds like a statement in support of individualization -- it is supposed to . . .! The model described in the remainder of this paper allows one to zero-in on the precise area of concern while at the same time provide feedback from a total classroom perspective.

Model for Formative Classroom Evaluation

The format for evaluation is dependent on the task at hand. It was determined by interviews with student-teachers, observations of their

teaching and feedback from their supervisors that essentials were identifiable for building a sound foundation for classroom instruction. These essentials are:

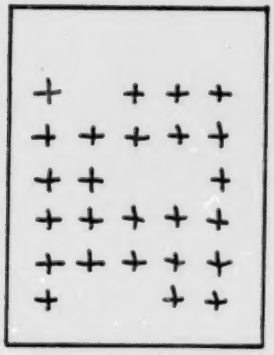
- physical arrangement of room (in terms of how it affects teacher mobility, student behavior, and interaction between teacher and student.)
- personal qualities (relative to interpersonal skills demonstrated)
- classroom management (teacher response to student behavior)
- teaching skills (relates to preparation and skills used in developing learning - includes questioning techniques)
- communication skills (including voice projection, enunciation, legible handwriting and correct spelling)
- additional data that affects classroom climate (neatness in shelves, bulletin boards, safety equipment, etc.)

Physical Arrangement of the Room

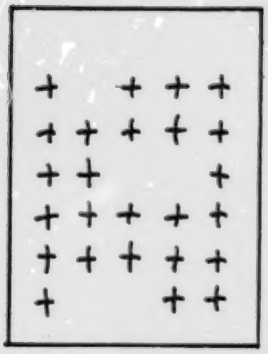
Longitudinal studies by Fifer (1977, 1980) focusing on room arrangement have shown that this is a critical factor in planning for optimum positive classroom interaction. Figure 1 indicates an actual case study of an 8th grade science classroom: Part A -- Teacher Mobility, Part B -- Classroom Behavior, and Part C -- Classroom Interaction. The classroom physical arrangement is recreated in each Part. Figure 2 indicates a completed monitoring following an observation. Part A -- Teacher Mobility indicates the teacher's pattern of movement during the period observed. Predominant movement in this example was at the front (the top of the rectangle always represents the front of the room). According to Wong (1972) discipline problems would be directly related to the distance from the teacher. Part B -- Classroom Behavior supports this finding. Each of the behaviors observed is recorded in terms of a code indicating a description and quarter-hour portions of the class periods. Part C -- Classroom Interaction is a summary of which students (and how often) interact with (questions/answers, comments) with the teacher during the observed class period.

Figure 1.

Part A
Teacher Mobility



Part B
Classroom Behavior



Part C
Classroom Interaction

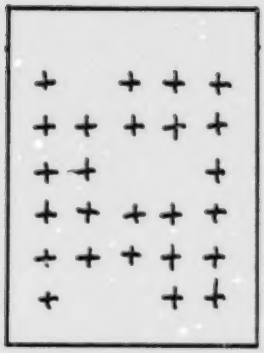
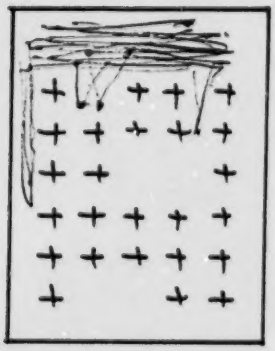
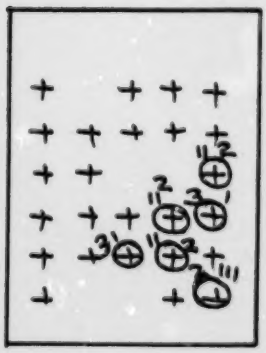


Figure 2.

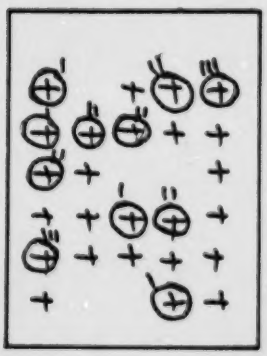
Part A
Teacher Mobility



Part B
Classroom Behavior



Part C
Classroom Interaction



Personal Qualities, Classroom Management, Teaching Skills and Communication Skills

The questions related to these factors are monitored in terms of a response scale -- Yes, Somewhat, No, Not Applicable. A place for "Comments" on the form allows for questions, etc., regarding observer responses to the factors observed. One of the areas included under teaching skills is that of questioning. This portion of the instrument can be used to monitor the "levels of questions" asked by both the teacher and students. If "level-of-questioning" is of concern in terms of moving students from lower-order to higher-order, this format offers a splendid method of monitoring, creating awareness and thus evidence for planning new strategies. Research by Fifer and Beach (1980) supports significant changes through use of this format in four-to-six weeks of careful monitoring.

Other Factors Observed

Basically, this allows for response to specific areas which were sometimes going unnoticed by the student-teachers. An unawareness of the physical needs of students or the physical characteristics of the room led to this monitoring-item inclusion. The safety equipment is imperative in a science classroom, and careful monitoring has produced improvements in not only acquisition of equipment but its location and use.

This form includes space at the top for *teacher name, school, district, date, subject, topic, grade level and type of class observed -- lecture, discussion, small group work, question/answer, laboratory or other.* The strategy related to this information is that the observer should be able to (without asking) discern the *subject, topic and type of class* being conducted. After

the observation a debriefing time must be scheduled (immediately if possible). It is while the experience is fresh that a discussion can be most helpful. Over a period of several observations, these forms can be compared to note progress. The form is printed on pressure-sensitive carbon paper so that both the observer and observed have copies following the debriefing. (Future printings for use with student-teachers will include two carbons, the additional copy for the supervising (cooperating) teacher. The more informed they [the supervising/cooperating teachers] are as to the observation and its findings, the more supportive and cooperative they are . . .)

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